DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 054 911 RE 003 742

AUTHOR Dolan, Sister Mary Edward

TITLE Secondary Developmental Reading Programs--Are They Feasible?

PUB DATE 23 Apr 71

NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the International Reading Association, Atlantic City, N.J., Apr 19-23, 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29

DESCRIPTORS *Developmental Reading; Individualized Reading; *Reading Programs; Reading Research; Schools of Education; *Secondary Grades; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Current trends in secondary developmental reading programs have been encouraging. Research on the components of such reading programs is being done, and the results of this research are being communicated to teachers in secondary schools. Education programs in colleges and universities are becoming involved with the local school systems and their problems, thus insuring realistic preservice training for beginning teachers and up-dating the content and practice of veteran teachers. Individualized performance-based instruction in which students work at their own rate on specific instructional objectives is being implemented in secondary schools. The trends seem to suggest that, although serious problems have hampered their development and/or implementation in the past, secondary developmental reading programs are indeed feasible. References are included. (AL)

ED054911

Sister Mary Edward Dolan, P.B.V.M.
Professor of Education
Clarke College
1550 Clarke Drive
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Implications of Some Current Issues and Practices for the Reading Teacher

Secondary Developmental Reading Programs-- Are They Feasible?

Implications, Evaluation, Conclusions

Friday, April 23, 10:30 a.m.

The profile of secondary developmental reading programs that evolves from studying available research is glum indeed. One feels like closing the books and periodicals and sighing a profound Amen. But that would be sidestepping one of the greatest challenges facing the leadership in reading today. Daniel Bell (2) states: "The future is not an overarching leap into the distance; it begins in the present." He further points out that:

> Time . . . is a three-fold present: the present as we experience it, the past as a present memory, and the future as a present expectation. By that criterion, the world of the year 2000 has already arrived, for in the decisions we make now, in the way we design our environment and thus sketch the line of constraints, the future is committed.

So in spite of our apparent failure to implement developmental reading programs in many of our secondary schools across the nation,

RE 003 742

I have great hope for the future. This optimism is based on three current happenings:

1. Research is currently being conducted to study components that could be combined to formulate developmental reading systems at the secondary level. Furthermore, the results of this research are being communicated to the profession.
2. Partnerships are being formed between College of Education and local school systems. This should insure more realistic pre-service education for our beginning teachers and up-date both content and practice for our veteran teachers.
3. Individualized performance-based education is not just being talked about but is being planned for or implemented in our schools.

Each of these three movements seems to be a response to three basic problems identified in the research reviewed by Dr. Artley: the absence of any coordinated system of reading instruction, uninformed and/or uninterested school personnel, and reading programs lacking direction. Each of the three movements that promises a better future for secondary reading programs will now be considered in greater detail.

Research Concerning the Components of Secondary School Reading Systems

Harold Herber and his associates at Syracuse are studying ways in which reading instruction can become part of the regular secondary school curriculum in each content area. In this three-

year study sponsored by the United States Office of Education, Herber (6) uses several basic assumptions as the generative source for his research:

1. The place for the functional teaching of reading in secondary schools is in the content classroom, with the instruction provided by classroom teachers who use their ordinary curriculum materials as the means for that instruction.
2. Reading goes beyond the decoding of symbols to the generation of ideas, the synthesis of ideas, and the application of ideas stimulated by those symbols.
3. The content of the material determines the process by which it is read. The teacher's task is to acquaint students not only with the content of the material but with the processes by which the content can be acquired.
4. If there is to be a simultaneous teaching of content and process, lessons must be well structured, never haphazard. Herber maintains that teachers, in general, provide for the preparation and evaluation phases of lessons but the guidance segment of the lesson is frequently the subject of exhortation but rarely of application. He believes that guiding students in the application of process so they understand both it and the content is the heart of the matter.
5. Students are the reason for the existence of the school. If the content and the process are to be taught

simultaneously, then the regularly required material of the curriculum must be adjusted to meet the needs of the students, not vice versa.

6. The role of the teacher must change. Herber believes that a teacher can shift the burden of learning to his students and help them carry it rather than holding to himself the knowledge students should possess and dispensing it daily in piecemeal fashion. When a teacher views himself as a guide to students' learning experiences, his students are not placed in the position of trying to guess what is in his mind as he asks questions.
7. Each component of the reading system should be subjected to many short term mini-studies each of which is conducted after the effects of the previous one have been determined and appropriate adjustments have been made for the next study. At the end of this series of iterative studies, the components should be well defined and could be combined into a whole system for secondary reading.

These assumptions were used to generate hypotheses concerning a secondary reading instructional system. Herber (6) reports the findings of these mini-studies conducted during the first year of his research in his book, Research in Reading in the Content Areas--First Year Report. The first year studies were concerned with three of the five components Herber identified as basic to the reading instructional system; 1) grouping (providing for individual differences, student interaction, and multiple recitation), 2) lesson

structure (preparation, guidance, evaluation), and 3) levels of comprehension (literal, interpretive, and applied). The two other components, organizational patterns (cause-effect, comparison-contrast, simple listing, time order) and skills (inference, deduction), were considered indirectly. The second and third years' research was built on the findings of the first year.

Although only the report of the first year of research is available in printed form currently, Herber has stated during this conference that the second-year report should be finished in the fall (1971) and the report of the third year's research should be available next spring (1972). The research project was officially completed on March 15, 1971.

Some of the findings reported by Herber during this conference confirmed some of his assumptions discussed earlier in this paper and some that originated as the project progressed from the first through the third years.

Herber's research supported the following assumptions:

1. It is important to have a definition of reading in the content areas so subject matter teachers understand their task of teaching content and process simultaneously. Content teachers must learn how the process of reading relates to their own disciplines.

2. Vocabulary can be used to help students learn the organizational structures of a given topic, course, or curriculum in each of the content areas.

3. Comprehension of content can be improved <u>when</u>

   a. the content (math, science, social studies, literature) texts are used for instruction
   b. stress is given to a construct of three levels of comprehension
      1) literal - what the author says
      2) interpretive - what the author means
      3) applied - how you can use the ideas
   c. students are guided in responding to the materials used

4. Grouping of students within a class is equally as productive as learning in the classroom setting where the teacher directly teaches the class if:

   a. students are taught the process of reading and reasoning
   b. the task is specific
   c. stress is given to concepts embedded in the text, especially when students are allowed to interact with one another.

In addition to this research study, Herber has also procured a handbook, Teaching Reading in Content Areas (7), to guide teachers of the basic school subjects who wish to teach students how to read their content materials and increase their understanding of the content at the same time. It is an attempt to show teachers how to develop content and process simultaneously.

Herber's continuing study is an outstanding example of the kind of research which projects hope for future secondary reading programs. Unrelated, fragmented, isolated bits of research have been laid aside and have been replaced by the coordinated study of basic components interrelated in a reading instructional system. Furthermore, periodic reports of the research are made available to the profession. Practical aspects needed for implementing significant components into current classroom curriculums have also been communicated to teachers and administrators in a handbook published on the common market. An approach such as this should certainly lead to the development of sound purposeful, coordinated systems of reading instruction at the secondary level.

Coalitions between Colleges of Education and Local School Systems

The second main block to achieving adequate secondary reading programs that emanated from reviewing the research was uninformed

and/or uninterested school personnel. An antidote to this problem could well be the forming of partnerships between Colleges of Education and local school systems to see how they can help and support one another in their educational endeavors.

Let me exemplify this. Last week the three Dubuque colleges invited all the superintendents, curriculum personnel, and principals of the neighboring school systems, to meet with the faculties of the Education Departments to discuss the following questions:

1. What direction is your school system going with regard to curriculum, organizational patterns, teaching strategies, demonstration school, etc.?
2. What kind of help, if any, do you think the local colleges can give to the local school systems?
3. What can the local schools and the local colleges do together to their mutual benefit?

The interaction at this meeting of small brainstorming groups should certainly arouse any uncommitted and inert administrators from their lethargy and stimulate them to renew their role as instructional leaders pledged to be catalysts of change and innovators in curriculum improvement. College instructors should also be motivated to descend from their "germ-free laboratories" and become involved with the day-to-day problems of the local schools. As a result of continuing dialogue between these two groups, it is hoped that the teacher education programs will become more realistic by providing early and continuous experiences for pre-service students--beginning with work in the schools as teacher aides, tutors, micro-teachers, assistant teachers, student teachers, and perhaps

culminating as interns. It is also hoped that some of the college instructors will become clinical professors and spend part of their time not only with students but also with teachers in the schools.

Early (4) and Niles (13) suggest approaches to in-service teacher education to alleviate the shortage of properly trained secondary reading personnel. Their listings include providing teachers opportunities to attend lectures and demonstrations by reading consultants, to examine and evaluate materials, to participate in "make-it, take-it" workshops and study groups.

Robert McCracken (12) believes that it takes a thousand pounds of traditional summer work, or ten thousand pounds of traditional undergraduate course work, to accomplish what one pound of on-the-job experience can do. Couldn't this in-service role be assumed by clinical professors who have one foot in basic theory in their colleges and the other foot in children's learning problems in the local classroom?

Joel Burdin (3) in A Reader's Guide to the Comprehensive Models Preparing Elementary Teachers summarizes nine different approaches to teacher education. Three of the basic components of each model include professional pre-service experiences, in-service or on-the-job training in the local schools, and clinical professors responsible for both the pre-service and in-service experiences.

This new thurst toward cooperative effort between colleges and local schools should prepare better teachers of reading at any level and leaven those teachers already in the field.

Individualized Performance-Based Education

The third basic problem identified in the review of the literature was the lack of direction in reading programs. Mager (11) says in his book, Preparing Instructional Objectives, that ". . . an instructor will function in a fog of his own making until he knows just what he wants his students to be able to do at the end of instruction." Mager also distinguishes between course descriptions (what a course is about) and course objectives (what students should be able to do after completing a course). Teachers have been too willing to lavish time on the general aims and purposes of secondary reading programs without indicating what it is that the student should be able to do as a result of his learning experiences.

Because this condition prevails, the public is clamoring for accountability in the schools. Parents are asking to be informed about what is expected of their children and how their children's needs are being met.

One response to this situation is the use of performance or behavioral objectives. Performance objectives are specific guidelines to the learner that usually contain at least three key components: (5, 14, 9, 8) 1) A clear, precise description of the behavior the learner is expected to exemplify, 2) The conditions under which the learner is to do what is asked, 3) A definition of a minimally acceptable level of proficiency.

Let's look at the following performance objectives (8). The first is concerned with the literal comprehension of the main idea of a paragraph. "Given 5 short paragraphs, the student will compose

titles appropriate to their content four out of five times."

The second deals with the literal comprehension of the details in a paragraph: "Given a reading selection and a list of incomplete sentences based upon it, the student will complete each sentence by filling in the appropriate details from the selection five out of six times."

Compare these performance objectives with the traditional objective, "to grasp the main idea of a paragraph" or "to recall the details of a paragraph." In the latter the behavior expected of the learner is not precisely stated, the conditions under which the learner is to perform the task are not specified, and a minimal level of proficiency is not stated.

Lewis (10) states that "It is generally agreed that teachers do not state educational objectives in behavioral terms. They usually rely on words or terms which are non-observable and which contain a wide range of interpretations.... The fault of this lies primarily with our teacher training institutions which do not offer courses in the preparation of instructional or educational objectives."

If the course offerings in college catalogs and the number of books being published are indicators of action, then this deficit is surely being removed now. One of the most frequently encountered topics is "Performance Objectives."

This movement toward the precise delineation of the reading task, the specification of conditions under which it is to be performed, and the evaluation of its achievement seems to indicate that if reading personnel are properly trained and motivated, secondary developmental reading programs can no longer be directionless.

Conclusions

The question asked at the beginning of this session was, "Secondary Developmental Reading Programs--Are They Feasible?"

Research indicates that serious problems have hampered their development and/or their implementation. There was little evidence of any coordinated system of secondary developmental reading instruction. Secondary school reading personnel were inadequately prepared and administrators seemed uninterested. Students in secondary schools wanted help in reading but the reading programs offered were often inadequate and directionless.

But what about NOW? Are they feasible NOW?

Yes--if research like that of Herber's continues.

Yes--if the results of such research is communicated to the profession and brought to a practical level in the education of secondary teachers.

Yes--if colleges of Education and local school systems become partners in developing secondary reading programs and training secondary reading personnel through pre-service and in-service education.

Yes--if the road map of learning is more carefully specified and evaluated in terms of the tasks to be performed.

Secondary developmental reading programs can become feasible TODAY!

References

1. Armstrong, R. J., et al. Developing and Writing Behavioral Objectives. Tuscon, Arizona: Educational Innovators Press, Inc., 1968.

2. Bell, Daniel. "The Year 2000--The Trajectory of an Idea," Daedalus 96 (Summer, 1967).

3. Burdin, Joel, ed. A Reader's Guide to the Comprehensive Models for Preparing Elementary Teachers. Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse.

4. Early, Margaret J. "About Successful Reading Programs," English Journal, 58 (April, 1969).

5. Gronlund, Norman E. Stating Behavioral Objectives for Classroom Instruction. Toronto, Ontario: Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., 1970.

6. Herber, Harold L. and Peter L. Sanders. Research in Reading in the Content Areas--First Year Report. Syracuse: Reading and Language Arts Center, Syracuse University, 1969.

7. Herber, Harold L. Teaching Reading in Content Areas. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.

8. Instructional Objectives Exchange. Los Angeles: P.O. Box 24095.

9. Kibler, R.J., Larry L. Barker, David T. Miles. Behavioral Objectives and Instruction. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1970.

10. Lewis, James. Administering the Individualized Instruction Program. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1971.

11. Mager, Robert F. Preparing Instructional Objectives. Palo Alto, California: Fearon, 1962.

12. McCracken, Robert. "Supervision of Reading Instruction in the Junior High School," Journal of Reading, 11 (January 1968)

13. Niles, Olive A. "Systemwide In-Service Programs in Reading," Reading Teacher, 19 (March 1966).

14. Plowman, Paul D. Behavioral Objectives. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1971.